
Stealing And Ethics

Ethics is the branch of study dealing with what is the proper course of action. Ethics is a requirement for human life. It is our means of deciding a course of action, without ethics our actions would be aimless. A basic rule is do not steal, something children learn from early on in their lives.

People often use words like good or bad defining what they know as ethical behaviour. Different views of stealing and attitudes to it in the context of an ethical and moral analysis can be illustrated by what results we get depending on whether the analysis is based on consequential or non-consequential.

John Stuart Mill was a philosopher who is considered to be an influential philosopher. Stuart Mill advocated utilitarianism. In this interpretation, stealing is considered wrong because it harms the victim.

A Utilitarianism approach; an action is right in so far as it promotes happiness, and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct. It is being said that stealing is wrong because it causes losses to people.

The reasons for not stealing based on consequentialism include the consequence of harming other people by taking their property from them. (Thiroux Jacques). However, not only a victim of thefts who are harmed. Stealing as practice may affect entire areas and communities, the younger generation can get involved in stealing. Stealing may have pronounced negative consequences for a person who steals. Stealing can be justified in terms of short-term consequences as an easy way of getting something without using extra money (Hinman).

Other challenging aspects involve arguments for stealing that refer to the corrupt economic system and the interpretation of consequences as good or bad.

A non-consequential Approach; a theory according to which the rightness or wrongness of an act. A non-consequentialist approach holds a different view stating that morality should be rooted in ethical principles to be followed.

These ethical and moral principles were developed by Kant. For example, stealing in the Robin Hood era, with the purpose of taking from the wealthy and giving to the poor is bad because the goals cannot justify dishonest acts of stealing that are inherently wrong. Negative consequences for a person who steals in the form of risks of being punished that evolve from the consequential approach are backed up by the non-consequential stance that points out such negative effects for a thief as feeling guilty of thefts, losing self-respect. All these aspects are related to the inherent principles of personality and are no less important than easily recognized, material, so to say, constituents of stealing.

Now when moral values are often degraded, with a huge number of people who take up a relativistic orientation lending itself to ambiguous stance the non-consequential approach may seem to lose some of its relevance.

However, in situations that cannot be consistently interpreted as good or bad using the consequential approach it is the non-consequential one that resolves the paradox and helps people choose the moral way of addressing controversial issues. An example of an issue is copying that is seen as stealing copyright materials. A consequential approach, the outcomes can be positive, with lots of people getting access to music and other sites they enjoy. At the same time, such practices harm individuals' intellectual property rights, which is bad. The problem can be resolved by applying the non-consequential principles that prevent copying as an action amounting in its moral characteristics to stealing.

Stealing is condemned on the basis of both consequential and non-consequential views, although these analyse it using different principles.

References

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